PERFORM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

DECIDING WHETHER TO USE THE PERFORM SYSTEM

1. **Can PERFORM be used in combination with other assessment tools such as an OCA (Organizational Capacity Assessment), the ITOCA (Integrated Technical and Organizational Capacity Assessment), NUPAS (Non-U.S. Organization Pre-Award Survey), or the OPI (Organizational Performance Index Measurement Tool)?**

   PERFORM is designed to serve as a stand-alone tool suite, although it can provide useful data for other performance assessment processes. It can also support CBLD-9 measurement. For example, during the PERFORM preparation phase, the team establishes an organizational vision and describes, with data, their current situation in relation to that goal. They also identify specific metrics for the vision.

   Similarly, data drawn from an OCA or OPI can help a team formulate performance goals and, in some instances, track metrics or measure changes in drivers or areas of practice. Alternatively, a PERFORM process may help narrow the scope of an OCA or ITOCA to domains with performance challenges rather than undergoing a full performance assessment for areas that are performing well.

2. **How can the PERFORM system support peer-to-peer learning?**

   The use of PERFORM entails mapping performance domains and practices, identifying performance patterns by examining their “drivers,” and developing improvement plans. A cohort of peer organizations could share information and insights on their performance goals and patterns, as well as the tactics and strategies they are using to meet these goals. Users could also learn from one another on the use of evidence, the engagement of non-staff actors in the mapping process, and ways in which they’ve customized the PERFORM process.

3. **What must I have in place to use PERFORM effectively?**

   The main prerequisite for using PERFORM effectively is a commitment to analyzing results and using them to formulate a performance improvement plan, which is then monitored by remapping priority areas. Users do not require specialized technology or advanced training to use PERFORM. If they choose to use the Microsoft Excel data template available on the PERFORM webpage, they will, of course, need to have access to the software.

4. **Are there some organizational contexts for which PERFORM is not appropriate or recommended?**

   Yes. The PERFORM process depends upon individuals who are thoroughly familiar with the organization and committed to participating in a process that entails mapping, analyzing, and planning. PERFORM would not be suitable for an organization with high staff turnover or one facing a major crisis.

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AUGUST 2024

CUSTOMIZATION

5. **What should we do if we believe that one or more of the PERFORM performance domains is irrelevant to our organizational vision or work?**

   We strongly recommend that the initial mapping cover all five performance domains for several reasons. First, the domains reflect the current research on capacity. Second, the performance domains are highly interrelated and reflect a systems-oriented approach to organizational strengthening. However, users can edit or remove practice statements that clearly don't fit their organization's context. For example, a governmental entity would probably choose to omit performance statements that pertain to reserve funds or donor relations. In this case, other critical practice statements might be added.

6. **I'm interested in using PERFORM to map performance, but I don't want to use other features of the system such as the preparation or 100-day plan. Is that possible?**

   While we strongly recommend that users begin by using all PERFORM features (goal setting, priority setting, mapping, performance improvement planning, and monitoring), we recognize that organizations differ, and one size does not fit all. PERFORM was designed to function as a performance improvement *system*, and most users will derive optimal benefit from using all system components. Nevertheless, organizations can modularize the system by selecting components that reflect their priorities.

7. **I notice that each of the statements of practice have italicized qualifiers (for example, "routinely," "consistently," and "frequently." Can I change these italicized phrases?**

   Yes. However, it is probably better for PERFORM users to simply agree on the meaning of these terms as they score. Asking, for example, how often a particular behavior must occur for it to be considered "frequent" is likely to stimulate a rich conversation while grounding the scoring in a shared understanding of the practice.

ADMINISTRATION

8. **What is the ideal PERFORM Core Team size?**

   The ideal Core Team size is between 5 and 10 people who are very familiar with the organization's work. Team members may come from staff, partner organizations, community volunteers, and board members.

9. **Do we need to convene a Core Team to discuss each performance domain and practice? Can we just create a survey that individuals could complete and then discuss responses?**

   The PERFORM system has been designed to foster deep conversations about organizational performance. Bringing people together helps facilitate candid exchanges. However, there may be circumstances that preclude an organization from convening a team to discuss performance in a timely manner. In such instances, a scoring survey might be used to score all performance statements and drivers. The survey would be followed by a rich discussion of its results that could pave the way for performance improvement planning.

10. **How is evidence used within the PERFORM process?**

    Being evidence-based is critical to PERFORM validity. However, in this system, the organization itself determines what constitutes evidence of their performance level, rather than using proscribed evidence standards. However, the evidence supporting performance claims must be objectively validated.

    Once mapping has been completed, evidence is gathered in support of scoring decisions. The quality of this evidence will be judged by an evidence review panel. Panelists will determine whether there is sufficient evidence to justify designating an area of practice as a strength or an asset. Areas of practice that have been scored as a challenge do not require evidence.

11. **How much time is needed to implement PERFORM?**

    PERFORM usage occurs in three phases. The first phase, Preparation, takes approximately 2-3 hours and involves setting the performance goals and priorities, and making key decisions about how and by whom key PERFORM activities will be carried out. Preparation takes place once per PERFORM cycle. The second phase, Mapping, requires approximately 6-8 hours. In this phase, the team scores itself in relation to practices, analyzes scoring patterns, and identifies areas that will serve as the focus of future performance-strengthening work. It is only during this initial mapping that the team will use all PERFORM statements of practice to score. The third phase involves evidence-based monitoring against performance improvement plans and will focus on areas of practice (along with the drivers associated with those practices). The time needed for this phase will depend on many factors, including the scope of the plan, the extent to which revisions to the plan are needed over time, and the difficulty of compiling and considering evidence. It is likely that the monitoring team will spend one full day per year engaged in monitoring. This full day would probably entail one-half day every six months.

12. **How often should we use PERFORM?**

    This is entirely up to the user. Possible scenarios include: (a) initial mapping with all performance domains and practices; (b) 100-day performance improvement plan creation; (c) plan monitoring through remapping of targeted areas. This sequence could then be repeated one year later.

13. **What changes can we make in how we use PERFORM? Are the customization options presented in the PERFORM documentation the only changes we can make?**

    We encourage users to innovate and experiment. Think of PERFORM as an open-source resource that will only improve over time as users share insights and lessons learned.

MISCELLANEOUS

14. **If I'm unsure about some aspect of PERFORM implementation, where can I go for help?**

    Currently, the best source of help is other users. If you were introduced to PERFORM through a partner, your partner can help you secure contact information for other users.

15. **Can we keep our PERFORM results confidential or must they be shared with others?**

    Users determine how and with whom they wish to share their results.

16. **I've heard a lot of criticism about capacity assessment tools that rely on the opinions of scorers. How does PERFORM differ from this type of opinion survey?**

    There are two important features embedded in PERFORM that distinguish it from a survey that elicits opinions about an organization's strengths and weaknesses. First, scoring decisions must be supported by evidence that is carefully examined by an Evidence Validation Panel. If the panel concludes that the evidence presented does not justify the team's scoring decision, the score is modified accordingly. Second, each scored practice represents a description with qualifiers (for example, "routinely," "frequently" or "consistently"). Scorers are asked to rate the extent to which descriptions of practice, together with their qualifiers, describe the organization. So, rather than offering an opinion, scorers are rating observable behaviors that include embedded performance criteria.